

SUTTON BRIDGE

URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,

FOR 1905.

To the Chairman and Gentlemen of the Sutton Bridge Urban District Council.

SIRS,

I beg to present to you my Ninth Annual Report, together with Statistical Tables for the year 1905, in accordance with the Regulations of the Local Government Board.

I.—Area and Population.

The Sutton Bridge Urban District is situated in the south east corner of the county of Lincolnshire, and has a maximum length and breadth of about one and four and a half miles respectively, and having an area of 5360 acres, with a population of 2107 according to the census of 1901, as compared with 2004 according to the census of 1891, showing an increase of 103 during the ten years.

The district is three and a half miles inland, with large open drains ventilating the neighbourhood for many miles, thus preventing what otherwise would be an unhealthily saturated condition of the soil. Geologically the district is marshy, composed of a fine light sandy silt, to a depth of about 50 feet. The land is chiefly arable, potato and seed growing being largely carried on, and the majority of the inhabitants being engaged in agricultural pursuits. The whole of the district is very flat, intersected by the River Nene, which is tidal, and having an average rise and fall of 20 feet during the spring and 15 feet during the neap tides.

Natural
Increase.

The natural increase of population during the year, that is the excess of births over deaths is 22, compared with 36 last year.

II.—Vital Statistics.

Births.

The births registered during the year were 46, of which 26 were boys and 20 girls, giving a birth rate 21·8 as against 28·4 per 1000 last year.

Deaths.

The deaths registered during the year were 24, the same as last year, giving a death-rate of 11·3 per 1000.

MORTALITY AT DIFFERENT AGES.

Under 1 year	the number of deaths was	3.
Between 1 and 5	„	1.
„ 5 „ 15	„	1.
„ 15 „ 25	„	3.
„ 25 „ 65	„	5.
„ 65 „ 70 and upwards	„	11.

**Infant
Mortality.**

There were three deaths of infants under one year, one from Tubercular Meningitis, one from Bronchitis, and one from Whooping Cough.

It is satisfactory to note that the greatest number of deaths occurred between the ages of 65 and 70 and upwards, a little below half of the total number.

III.—Infectious Diseases.

**Whooping
Cough.**

Towards the close of the year Whooping Cough was epidemic in the district, and as there were more than half the number of infants away from School I advised you to close the Schools till after the Christmas holidays. Apart from this epidemic we have been singularly free from epidemic diseases.

Scarlet Fever.

There was one case of this disease imported from Wisbech, in King Street.

Typhoid.

There were three cases of Typhoid Fever, one in a cottage down Hospital Drove, as far as I could ascertain I feel sure this was an imported case from Lynn; the other case occurred in Croot's Lane and one in the New Road, and as both these people had recently come to the district, it is only fair to presume these were also imported cases.

Consumption.

There were two deaths due to this disease as against one last year. By my advice you added this disease to the diseases under the Infectious Diseases Notification Act; may I draw your attention to the fact that although you passed a resolution to this effect, nothing further than this has been done in the matter. According to Section vii of this Act it states in sub-sections iii and iv.—

III.—“An order under this section and the revocation and variation of any such order shall not be of any validity until approved by the Local Government Board.

IV.—“When it is so approved, the local authority shall give public notice thereof by advertisement in a local newspaper and by handbills and otherwise as the local authority think sufficient for giving information to all persons interested. They shall also send a copy thereof to each registered medical practitioner whom after due inquiry they ascertain to be resident and practising in their district.”

I would suggest that this be done at an early a date as possible and I would add that the adoption of the Infectious Diseases Prevention Act—this would not entail any extra expenditure but would very materially help us to cope with any outbreak of infectious or other disease.

Erysipelas.

A severe case of Erysipelas occurred in Princes Street.

Diarrœha.

As usual there has been an epidemic of Diarrœha during the summer and autumn, however it was not of a severe type and there were fewer cases.

I must again draw your attention to the fact that

there is no provision in the district for hospital isolation and disinfection. Hitherto you have been singularly fortunate in not having to cope with any serious epidemic of Infectious disease and I would strongly urge the advisability of seriously considering this all important matter.

IV.—Preventive Measures.

On the outbreak of any infectious disease, the patients are isolated where possible in their homes, and a sheet dipped in strong carbolic acid is fastened over the door of the room, and directions with regard to persons entering the infected rooms given. In the case of Typhoid Fever besides these precautions special receptacles for the stools and urine are provided and these are disinfected and removed under the supervision of the Inspector of Nuisances.

The Schoolmaster is notified of the existence of infectious disease in any house and other children in the infected homes are kept from school.

During epidemics of infectious diseases, disinfectants are supplied free of cost, and at the termination of the illness the houses are visited by your Inspector and the rooms, bedding, etc., thoroughly disinfected by means of sulphur dioxide gas.

V.—Water Supply.

The district entirely depends on shallow wells and rain water cisterns for its supply of water and this naturally varies in quantity and quality at different seasons of the year. As most of the rain water is collected from the roofs of houses into cisterns, a great deal of decomposed vegetable matter such as dead leaves, is washed down into the cisterns, and after a downpour the water from these cisterns is always of a dirty black colour.

I have often seen these cisterns cleaned out when empty, and it is usual to see the bottom of the cistern covered with a black, slimy deposit to the depth of three or four inches of putrifying vegetable matter.

I find that the majority of people utilize these rain water cisterns for drinking and culinary purposes. The majority of the cottages in the district have their rain water cistern just outside their back door, and not very far distant is the sink for the disposal of their slops; I have often noticed these sinks stopped up and the slop water running over the yard, and it would not be unreasonable to suppose that some of this water might percolate or run over into the rain water cistern.

I have just completed an analysis of the water from several of the pumps in the district which are mainly used by the inhabitants and I will quote the results of these analyses.

- 1.—Pump opposite the "Anchor Inn," a fairly good sample of water, boiling or filtering would make it a good potable water.
- 2.—Pump in Chestnut Terrace, the water is impure and quite unsafe for domestic purposes.

- 3.—Pump between Queen Street and King Street, the water is liable to serious contamination and quite unsafe for drinking purposes.
- 4.—Pump in Chapel Chase, a fairly good sample of water, if boiled or filtered it would be quite fit for drinking purposes.
- 5.—Pump in Wharf Street, this water cannot be considered a safe potable water.
- 6.—Pump in Custom House Street, a fair sample of water, it would be quite fit for domestic purposes if boiled or adequately filtered.

A good water supply besides being absolutely necessary, would I feel sure be gladly welcomed by the inhabitants.

It has lately been proposed and a Bill is before Parliament to supply the district between Spalding and Sutton Bridge inclusive with a good water supply.

As this is to be undertaken by a private company, the only additional expense to the inhabitants would be a water rate, of course this rate would only be paid by those using the water. The maximum rate would be 8/8 per annum on houses rated at £5 and under, 10% on houses rated between £5 and £20, and from £20 to £30 9%, and 1% below for every £10 above £30, till it reaches 6%.

I sincerely trust this water scheme will be successful and meet with your unanimous approval as well as the other Councils in the district.

VI.—Sewerage and Sewage Disposal.

Street Drainage.

The gutters, gratings and drain pockets are at certain intervals cleaned out in the bye streets at the east end of the town. This method, which has been in practise for many years past, consists of drawing long wooden poles by wire ropes through the drains from one pocket to the other, besides being unsatisfactory and insanitary, it takes a considerable amount of time, and has of course to be done during the daytime. I would suggest that the open gratings in Lime Street, Custom House Street, and High Street, be replaced with solid slabs, and having an inlet on either side for the water to drain into the pockets; they should be fitted with ventilating shafts. These open gratings during the summer and when they are being cleaned out, are a great source of nuisance. They are placed about a yard from the front door of the houses, and emit a most offensive odour; complaints are continually being made about these.

The street drains empty themselves into what is called the "tip" this is situated about 100 yards from the corner of Princes Street; as this is an open drain, the stench at times is a great nuisance to the inhabitants of that street. The "tip" again empties itself into the Westmere drain, this drain after many windings empties into the river about one and a half miles from the Bridge. This Westmere drain is a continual source of complaint, in dry weather especially, and from a want

of sufficient downfall, which is common to most of the drains in the town, there is a deposit of a most offensive, green, slimy, stagnant scum ; during the year the banks of this drain gave way and so added to the insanitary condition. As an improvement, I would suggest that the " tip " be thoroughly emptied, the bottom and sides be bricked, and that large drain pipes be placed in such a way as to create more downfall than there is at present.

House.

The majority of the houses have privy vaults adjoining the back of the houses, a fair number have privy middens, and there are a fair number supplied with pails.

As there is some likelihood of our having a good water supply I trust it will not be very long before the majority of the houses are supplied with water closets. However as this would entail a heavy expenditure I would again urge you to adopt the pail system and do away with the privy vaults and middens.

These vaults and middens always have been and always will be a continual source of nuisances and endless labour. The pails are regularly collected on certain nights during the week.

My attention is constantly being drawn to the unsatisfactory and irregular way in which these vaults and middens are emptied, and even after notice has been given they are not attended to for weeks after.

VII.—Dwellings and Areas round Dwellings.

With regard to this I beg to repeat what I said in my last report.

Most of the houses have a small plot of land attached usually at the back of the premises, containing a hard water well, a soft water cistern below the ground, a sink for slop water, a privy vault or midden, a pig sty or a fowl run, and in many cases a manure heap, one can understand that it is difficult for a good supply of fresh air to get near the house, much less inside the house. The sinks in a great number of instances are a source of considerable nuisance as they are continually blocked and overflow in consequence, they are quite inadequate for what they are required, and emit a most offensive odour.

Many of the houses in the district are insanitary and unfit for habitation, and I would again point out that two cottages by the Peacock Inn, four at the corner of Bridge Road opposite the Oddfellows' Hall and two by Mr. Grimley's office are unfit for habitation. They are badly constructed, ill-ventilated, and with little or no area accommodation. The only suggestion one can make is that they should be pulled down and rebuilt.

My suggestion of the asphaltting or paving of the yard by the Billiard Room at the Hotel has not been carried out and I would again urge this being done.

VIII.—Factory and Workshop Act.

- Workplaces.** I have visited the work-places in the district and find all have Abstracts of the regulations and as far as possible keep to the conditions of this.
- Bakehouses.** There are four Bakehouses in the district, in one I found there was no Abstract of the regulations. I have visited them on several occasions and found them clean and well ventilated, they all admitted they had white-washed and cleaned the houses twice a year.
- Factory.** Messrs. Smith's Timber Co. is the only factory in the district, I have visited this on several occasions. The out-door privies are still in the same condition I reported to you in my last two reports. I consider these privies are both insanitary and inadequate and I trust the improvements I have suggested will be remedied at a very early date.
- Slaughter Houses.** The three slaughter houses in the district, all duly registered are often visited by me and found to be generally satisfactory.
I consider the pig-stye adjoining the slaughter house on the river bank a public nuisance and would urge this being done away with.
- Dairies and Cowsheds.** There are no less than seven dairies in the district, I do not think any of them have applied for registration as yet. They are well kept and the utensils scrupulously clean.
The cowsheds have been inspected at intervals by your Inspector and found to be generally satisfactory.

IX.—Refuse Collection.

There is still no system of regular refuse collection, and I would again advise you to adopt the excellent suggestion of your late Inspector, Mr. R. Gregory.

That in order to facilitate the carrying on of this work householders are requested to arrange :—That ashes and house refuse be brought in scuttles, tubs or boxes of suitable size to the near side of the adjoining street, when it will be collected and taken away by the scavengers every Friday ; that a bell be attached to the scavenger's cart to give warning of its approach.

The best receptacle for ashes and house refuse is a zinc scuttle with handles, they are inexpensive and can be purchased at any ironmongers. That printed handbills be distributed to every householder to this effect.

All the refuse collected is deposited in a field about half-a-mile from the town.

X.—Schools.

I have repeatedly inspected the Schools. The Infant Schools are badly ventilated and the present system of warming them is inadequate and quite out of date. The fire-places are large with large open grates and huge chimneys, so that

with the terrible draught there is, most of the warmth goes up these chimneys. I consider this matter requires your immediate and urgent attention.

I would again repeat what I said in my last report about children and schools.

Infectious diseases as a rule are prone to attack children at the beginning of school life and I think it a mistake to send children to school at so early an age as four years. I would urgently advise some means for the provision of food for young children, who come from long distances, especially during the winter months. Many children come from a distance of three or four miles in all weathers, and often in order to avoid being late their meals are hurriedly taken and they arrive in anything but a happy mood for being taught.

In some Schools it is a usual custom to give the children cups of cocoa, could not this be done in our schools, in the cold weather with perhaps the addition of hot soup.

I would suggest that children coming from a distance should be obliged to bring a change of shoes and stockings so as to change when their feet are wet.

In wet weather, children who come from a distance ought to be kept in the schools and not allowed to wander about the streets in the dinner hour, this would not be a difficult matter if games could be played or stories read aloud to them. The children as a whole are fairly well clad and look neat and tidy and they all seem happy and interested in their work. One cannot help noticing the care and kindness bestowed on the children by their teachers. I think it would be advantageous for a course of health lectures to be given to the elder children, and the drilling might be more efficient than it is. There are many ex-soldiers who would gladly give this instruction at a reasonable charge. I would strongly urge the total abolition of slates, there is always danger of communicating disease from the natural and primitive method of cleaning slates usually adopted by children.

The floors of Schools should be washed with disinfectant once every week and the walls white-washed twice a year.

It is only right when we have the welfare of the population to consider, that we should study any means to check and prevent disease, hence these remarks are naturally directed to the schools and also to the infant population. I trust that you will give serious consideration to this very important subject.

It is somewhat a difficult matter in writing a report like this, in a district like ours, to avoid continually making complaints and finding faults, so that it is all the more pleasing to have to congratulate you on the several improvements that have been done in the district.

I have to congratulate you on the improvement in the lighting of our streets, this has been universally commented upon.

And again the improved condition of the streets down Crosby Row and Granville Terrace has been of the greatest boon, especially to pedestrians. The trees in the Churchyard which overhang the road have been trimmed, and this could with advantage be done throughout the whole length of the road.

The Dock Crossing I am sorry to say is still a public nuisance and anything done to remedy this would be gladly welcomed by everyone.

There are still no Bye-laws in the district.

XII.—Routine Sanitary Work.

I have on many occasions made systematic inspections of the district and many nuisances complained of were abated as soon as possible. Street drains in different parts of the district were cleaned out when blocked, as well as drains connected with sinks in Queen Street, King Street and Princes Street.

I am,

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

J. G. B. COLEMAN,

Medical Officer of Health.

January 22, 1906.